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ABSTRACT

Based on the work of the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges and the Center on Education and Training for Employment, this document addresses the subject of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the community and technical college by examining the concept, application, and implementation of TQM and the lessons learned. First, "The TQM Concept and Its Approach to Effecting Change," by Tina Lankard, describes TQM as a system and philosophy of organizational management with the potential for increasing quality, productivity, and customer satisfaction. Next, "The Need for Cultural Transformation," by Stanley J. Spanbauer, describes the conceptual changes that result from the adoption of a TQM philosophy and the transformation in organizational culture necessary for the adoption of TQM. Spanbauer focuses on balancing the technical and human/social aspects of the concept, changes in management and leadership, and change in the relationships between management and faculty and staff. In the final chapter, "Application of TQM in the Community College: Lessons Learned," Sharon Coady of Edison Community College and Billy Hair of Savannah Technical Institute share their colleges' experiences in implementing TQM. (KP)

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Total Quality Management in the Community College:

Concept, Application, Implementation – Lessons Learned

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TQM

National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges

National Alliance Mission Statement

The National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges is a consortium of community, technical, and junior colleges from across the United States whose mission is to promote excellence in postsecondary vocational, technical, career, and occupational education.

The Alliance fulfills this mission by:

- sharing resources,
- networking,
- finding solutions to common problems,
- providing common avenues for organizational development,
- conducting professional development activities, and
- securing financial resources.

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The Center fulfills its mission by conducting applied research and using the full range of resources of The Ohio State University in evaluation studies and by providing leadership development, technical assistance, and information services that pertain to—

- the delivery of education and training for work;
- the quality and outcomes of education and training for employment;
- the quality and nature of partnerships with education, business, industry, and labor;
- an opportunity for persons in at-risk situations to succeed in education, training, and work environments;
- the short- and long-range planning for education and training agencies; and
- approaches to enhance economic development and job creation.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

CONCEPT, APPLICATION, IMPLEMENTATION— LESSONS LEARNED

by

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Billy Hair
Stanley Spanbauer

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1994

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Foreword

Total Quality Management has been the subject of countless publications and presentations targeted to business, industry, and education. Its appeal is that as a system and philosophy of organizational management, it has the potential of increasing quality, productivity, and customer satisfaction, all of which contribute to economic competitiveness. How TQM works and under which conditions it works best are topics of interest to all institutions and organizations that are looking to improve their operation.

This document addresses the subject of Total Quality Management in the community and technical college by examining the concept, application, and implementation of TQM and the lessons learned. It is based on he work of members of the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges in conjunction with the Center on Education and Training for Employment at The Ohio State University. The first chapter presents an overview of the concept of TQM and its approach to achieving systemic change. A description of the cultural transformation required for the adoption of TQM is given in Chapter Two. Chapter Three contains a report on the practical application of TQM by two colleges in the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges—Edison Community College and Savannah Technical Institute. In their reports, Sharon Coady (Edison) and Billy Hair (Savannah Tech) describe their colleges' experiences implementing TQM, the lessons they learned along the way, and their recommendations for other community colleges who are in the initial stages of adopting TQM.

TQM has been the theme issue of the National Alliance for the past two years and, therefore, the focus of presentations at the Alliance's semiannual meetings. The National Alliance wishes to thank the following individuals (and their organizations) for serving on the program at these meetings:

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Ray D. Ryan, Executive Director
Center on Education and Training
for Employment
The Ohio State University

The TQM Concept and Its Approach to Effecting Change

Tina Lankard, Center on Education and Training for Employment

Philosophy

Three quality theorists whose work has most influenced the quality planning processes initiated by U.S. businesses are W. Edwards Deming, Joseph M. Juran, and Philip B. Crosby, Sr. The theories of each of these individuals have a common theme—participatory management that involves input, problem solving, and decision making by all members of an organization and its customers (Spanbauer and Hillman 1987):

- Deming promotes the role of management as one of facilitating workers to do their best by removing barriers that prevent high quality work and by involving workers in decision making. He emphasizes process improvement as crucial to product improvement.

- Juran suggests that management problems are related to human element errors. He promotes management training in quality concepts and the use of quality circles to improve employee communication across levels. His focus is on understanding customer needs.

- Crosby promotes a "prevention" process wherein requirements for quality conformance are jointly written by managers and workers and address the needs of the customer. He promotes a "zero defects" standard in which the cost of nonconformance to the standard is eliminated.

Although each of these theorists focuses on a specific theme, all of the theories are reflected in a general way in Crosby's model, which presents four pillars that support the quality process in any organization (ibid., pp. 25-26).

- **Management Participation and Attitude.** The new concept of quality must be introduced and supported by management.

- **Professional Quality Management.** Quality councils, established throughout the organization, are crucial to management of quality.

- **Employee Participation.** Employees must be given comprehensive training about quality concepts so that they will commit to the concept.

- **Recognition.** Reinforcements for employee efforts and achievements should be planned and offered at different levels through the organization.

These pillars to support the quality improvement process reflect a philosophy that places customer satisfaction as the organization's primary goal, with the word "customer" referring to **internal customers** (workers in other departments who are dependent on receiving high quality work to do their jobs successfully) as well as to **external customers** (the ultimate users of the product or service) (Crumrine and Runnels 1991).

TQM requires a change of attitude on the part of an organization's management and staff wherein all workers are encouraged, empowered, and committed to seek out improvements in process, products, and services and to accept responsibility for solving problems as they arise. It promotes the use of interdisciplinary teams of workers who must work cooperatively and collaboratively to achieve common objectives and requires the backing of management as evidenced by allocation of time for team meetings and the identification of areas for staff development.

Approach

Actual implementation of a quality improvement approach to operations requires movement from the philosophical concept of TQM to a strategic framework for implementation. According to McCormack (1992), when TQM efforts do not meet expectations, it is often because of poor tactics and lack of a strategic framework.

Crumrine and Runnels (1991) identify five phases or categories for implementation of TQM in a vocational-technical school or similar educational institution. These categories and their related tasks are:

- **Commitment.** Investigate, evaluate, adopt, and obtain commitment to TQM.

- **Organizational Development.** Integrate TQM into key management processes; educate, train, and offer support to employees.

- **Customer Focus.** Determine work teams; analyze customers, products/ services.

- **Process Orientation.** Identify, standardize, and improve process control.

- **Continuous Improvement.** Develop method for identifying opportunities and integrating the improvement process into daily operation.

Sutcliffe and Pollock (1992) allude to similar strategies as they discuss the implementation of TQM in institutions of higher education. They suggest that "implementation begins with the drawing up of a quality policy statement and the establishment of an organizational framework for both managing and encouraging the involvement of all parties in attaining quality through teamwork" (p. 24). They recommend that all workers through the institution be trained in quality assurance methods, problem-solving techniques, and communications and that evaluation occur at all levels and include the customers' perceptions as well. These and other relevant strategies for implementing the TQM process require transformations on all levels of an educational institution—transformations that include change in attitude, change in process, change in organizational structure. Spanbauer attests to the value of involving faculty and staff in the change process, pointing out that as "faculty and staff are more involved in shaping and monitoring plans, they become more active and committed to continuous improvement." He contends that while "culture changes are gradual at first, they eventually become meaningful and permanent rather than cosmetic and temporary because people at all levels become more willing to make the major commitment needed to create this reform." In the next chapter, Spanbauer discusses the need for cultural transformation and presents some caveats about the challenges one can expect in attempting to effect change.

The Need for Cultural Transformation

Stanley J. Spanbauer, Ph.D.
Fox Valley Technical College

Change

Total quality is a philosophy that promotes changing some very ingrained ways of doing things in an educational institution. This shift in paradigms can best be seen by detailing some conceptual change items. Below is an abbreviated list of these changes:

- Improving the quality of education by defining outcomes, applying customer-focus principles, and changing the way we teach
- Reducing adversarial relationships between managers and staff, unions and administration, suppliers and customers, and separate organizational functions
- Improving the indicators of health of the organization by reducing waste and errors, stemming the tide of increasing costs, and improving the value of instruction and services
- Using technological changes and human development approaches to the best possible advantage in both instruction and administration
- Applying the TQM premises of communications, trust, and teamwork to create an environment of increased productivity, improved process management, and visible commitment to the initiative itself
- Establishing assessment systems which use statistically based processes and scientifically designed strategies that require information in ways which are different from usual practices

As these conceptual changes creep into an organization, the new paradigm may challenge some sacred traditions related to titles, rank, and prestige which have

accrued over the years. Much of what has been done under the guise of management may be hard to dissipate even when it becomes apparent that those traditions have been detrimental to faculty and staff's dignity and worth, and inappropriate to achieving excellence in the school. However, advocates for TQM are growing in numbers and there is much support for TQM at all levels of the educational hierarchy as well as in business and industry. It is the task of educators who believe TQM is the reform wave of the future for public education to become champions for TQM. In doing so, they will promote school reform that brings school administrators, faculty, staff, and students to competence in TQM skills and practices.

Technical vs. Human Skills—A Delicate Balance

Effectively deploying Total Quality Management demands a delicate balancing of the technical and human/social aspects of the concept. TQM has failed in business and industry and in schools when overanxious executives put too much emphasis one or the other. Too much emphasis on statistical process control tools, strategies, and processes without developing effective teams, empowering people, or focusing on customer needs will lead to serious setbacks and eventual failure. Similarly, over-emphasis on teamwork and human relations without the use of the tools, strategies, and operational processes won't work either. The secret is to strike and maintain a balance between these opportunities. That requires leadership and vision and continued assessment based on agreed-upon criteria.

Viewing TQM as a process facilitates the balancing between the technical and human elements of implementation. If there is to be enduring and systematic change in our schools, school managers, administrators, and board members must begin to refocus their thinking about traditional business management approaches of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, and incorporating new management styles of empowerment, enablement, facilitation, and process improvement with a constant focus on customer satisfaction. The goal of the TQM effort is to foster continuous improvement by motivating capable educators to work together to improve all processes, including teaching and learning. This requires everyone to change because TQM becomes everyone's responsibility.

Management and Transformation

Since the hallmark of TQM is continuous improvement, it relies on carefully designed systems and processes that are subject to constant review. This type of

system/process design takes time and requires a focus on customer satisfaction. Management must create this environment and see that the interest is maintained. This requires a change from managing outcomes to managing processes. TQM formalizes the problem-solving approaches which are key to continuous process improvement. A problem-solving attitude is created and fostered by the ever-attentive manager who has the goal of making the management of processes routine.

While there is a need to upgrade technical systems and give increased attention to process, strategies, tools and information, it is important to note that this mathematical and scientific focus may not be the key variable in the TQM equation. Employee involvement and other human resource elements appear to be the clear leaders in recent surveys among TQM organizations. The latest Gallup Survey conducted for The American Society for Quality Control shows that executives from more than 900 companies rated inspiring employee motivation, changing corporate culture, and educating employees as the three highest methods for improving quality in their organizations.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that in an organization, including a school, the management function has three interdependent responsibilities:

- The system which is managed and controlled
- The people who are an important part of the system
- The environment or organization which contains the system

With this in mind, leadership in a TQM organization must focus equally on each of these responsibilities. It is not enough to manage and control systems and facilities; today's leaders must also lead people and encourage them to meet their own goals and aspirations while achieving the purposes of the organization.

Because the culture of the organization is dramatically influenced by its management philosophy, it is essential to differentiate between the characteristics of managers and leaders as they shift to a total quality management approach. Leadership begins with a positive perspective on power because handling and using power is a part of the transformation of an organization. The transformational use of power is therefore a central element of leadership. It can be contrasted with the management level which is "transactional" rather than "transformational." In the transformation of a school, leadership power is used to influence the thoughts and actions of faculty and staff.

Another major difference between managers and leaders involved in TQM relates to vision. Leaders have a vision, a dream, a frame of reference that culminates in an almost obsessive commitment to a concept or idea. Leaders express this commitment by communicating and interpreting that vision and dream effectively to all people in the organization. This is done with the visible action that extends beyond speeches, written reports, or memos. Leaders also have integrity. They create trust, which they earn without necessarily being likable or charismatic. This means that leaders follow through on decisions without changing the rules arbitrarily. They back their champions with fervor and accept responsibility for mistakes that occur during the paradigm shift. Leaders exhibit reliability and candor so everyone in the organization knows clearly what they stand for. This characteristic is especially important when implementing TQM in schools.

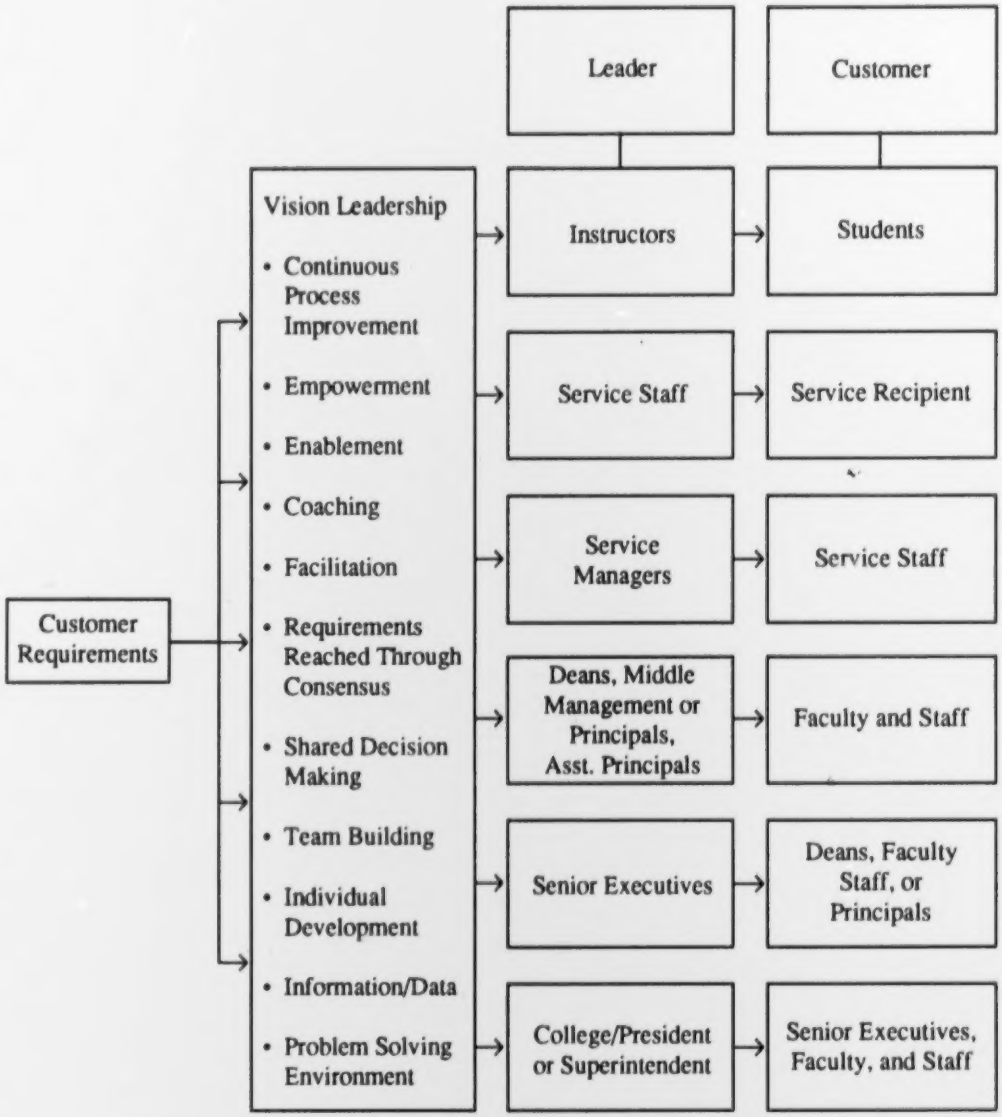
Leaders create movement toward the school's purpose. They are strategic and long-ranged in their thinking and always seem to find problems. The main quality required of leaders in a TQM directed organization is the ability to assist others to complete their tasks by sharing, inspiring, rewarding, and structuring to create empowerment. This involves providing resources while mentoring and educating others. Direction is provided by sharing ideals and vision and inspiring others to do more than they thought they could.

Leaders are found everywhere in the TQM organization. In schools, they are found in classrooms, service departments, and administrative offices. They exhibit the same skills, techniques, and practices at all levels with different types of customers. The teacher as a leader uses TQM concepts in the instructional setting with the student as the customer. The service manager uses leadership skills when empowering front-line workers to handle customer complaints appropriately and efficiently. The CEO exhibits leadership by creating the vision and "walking the talk." Figure 1 illustrates this leadership concept and shows the customer/supplier relationship at each level.

This new model of leadership, therefore, calls for administrators to look at faculty and staff as their customers. This focus compels instructors to likewise view their students as customers with certain needs, rights, and privileges. This leadership approach calls for a most important competency for both administrators and faculty—intensive listening.

The leadership style which is needed today, then, is one which flows from those being led, with leaders serving people in ways in which they, the customers, define their needs. For TQM's ethic is service—a shift from the self to others.

The Leadership Model in Education



Leader → Managing processes (not things) and seeing that all (Faculty, Staff, Students) work together for the optimization of the Teaching/Learning System.

Figure 1

The best message one can give to administrators, faculty, service managers, and all others who are in leadership roles is that you cannot hope to change your institution, your classroom, or your service department unless you, yourself are willing to change. This requires relationships with others that are based on genuine caring and trust with an understanding of others. It requires integrity and respect rather than control, manipulation, and other forms of autocratic management. It calls for a renewed focus on positive relationships.

Management and Faculty/Staff Relationships

Faculty and staff will not stand in the way of TQM application if the changes being advocated are developed with their active involvement. Even those in organized teaching unions are rethinking their assumptions about the teaching/learning process and how it is organized. They agree that they have an active and positive role in influencing the environment and organization of the school. They are aware of the blurring of jurisdictional lines between managing and teaching and recognize their need to be proponents of change.

Creating schools as centers of reform and renewal using TQM will require new policy-making, which may be directly influenced by governance and welfare agreements between faculty/staff and administration. Unless there is trust and goodwill, the processes to reach agreements on work-related issues will be used to inhibit change. Therefore, it is imperative to understand that major reform will involve compromise and trade-offs in areas that traditionally have been battlegrounds in faculty/staff and administration negotiations.

Teamwork is critical for a successful TQM effort. All groups in the organization must develop skills to work together in a problem solving, issue-oriented, mutually-acceptable environment. Administrators must engage faculty and staff in all aspects of the change process by . . .

- sharing decision making with them on crucial matters such as operational and long-range planning, cost containment, budgeting, and research development;

- empowering them by giving them a voice in decision making and meaningful influence and control over processes which are closest to them;

- providing them with an open door and sharing all information and data related to management and financial operation;

- approaching bargaining issues using problem solving and consensus-reaching techniques rather than adversarial tactics; and

- dismissing traditional views of each other as being adversarial by becoming inseparable when it comes to matters of common interest and by avoiding unprofessional and unethical practices.

Cooperative relationships will not come easily. Patience and education is required as both the administration and faculty/staff leadership undergo transformation.

Application of TQM in the Community College: Lessons Learned

Sharon Coady, Edison Community College
Billy Hair, Savannah Technical Institute

Introduction

Understanding the philosophy of the TQM concept and its approach to change is essential for institutional leaders who wish to engage in educational reform and restructuring. However, applying the TQM philosophy and approach within an organization requires a certain element of trial and error. Community colleges that are among the first to adopt TQM can provide valuable insight into the process—describing what works and what doesn't work—so others can learn from their experiences. Details of Edison Community College's and Savannah Technical Institute's experiences in implementing TQM on their campuses are presented below.

The Long Slow Road to Quality

by Sharon Coady

At Ohio's Edison Community College, we see quality management as first and foremost a philosophy—an attitude toward people and an organizational culture. Therefore, when we began five years ago to improve institutional quality, we began by working on our culture. We did not set out to implement TQM. However, about two years into our effort, we realized we were practicing many TQM principles.

Historically, Edison had been run rather autocratically and this attitude toward faculty and staff had permeated the institution. The president thought it was imperative that this change. He set about trying to get everyone to buy into a mentality that saw students, coworkers, supervisors, and employees as valuable human beings who deserved the best possible service from each one of us.

How does one do that? Much has been written about initiating cultural change, but it is a complex and subtle process, one not likely to produce the instant success stories that the change authors thrive on. At Edison, we had no fancy slogans and catchy project titles. We had no goals for attitudinal change and no behavior run

charts. Rather, we had, and continue to have, a campaign to restructure the college's values.

The president began by meeting regularly with all college constituencies, talking with them about what he believed, what he valued, and what he was working toward. He wrote and distributed a document about his management assumptions. He did not announce that he was embarking on TQM. Edison deliberately has played down the entire initiative within the college, seeking to avoid labels, fanfare, and anything resembling a management fad. The rhetoric instead has focused on the value and the meaning of what we do.

This campaign of rhetoric was picked up by the new dean who also understood the power of a common vocabulary and of multiple voices using that vocabulary. To lead change, an institution's leaders must reach agreement upon their goals, strategies, and public voices. When all administrators say the same thing and say it often, the message does indeed begin to be heard. The concept is so simple that one is tempted to scoff at it. But its roots in complex learning theory belie its simplicity, and its power to effect change is remarkable. Others throughout the organization learn to speak the new language, giving them a common vocabulary with which to approach problems.

Early on, one slogan did emerge. Some of us had been struck by the old marketing story that railroads had nearly gone under because they did not know their business. They had defined their business as railroads, not transportation. As we talked about distance learning, credit for prior learning, and other new delivery systems, we were struck that our business is not teaching. It is learning. We sell learning. Our Business is Learning. That simple phrase became a vision statement of sorts that engendered discussion, new ways of thinking, and ultimately commitment. If our business is learning, then we needed to know more about our basic assumptions regarding teaching and learning. The dean took her academic administrative staff on a short retreat and posed one question: What do we believe about teaching and learning? Out of that day-long exercise came a common set of terms which quickly became the daily working vocabulary of the group. As the associate deans talked with instructors over the next two years, this rhetoric began to permeate the faculty.

At the same time, the president and deans were developing a customer service vocabulary. This was a less difficult task. The customer service program originated in a desire to re-orient the entire college culture toward the needs of students. The college has had links for years with a Deming user group and saw such a program as a fundamental element in quality management. Essentially, there was one idea:

Provide the best possible service to both internal and external clients. While it certainly is possible to provide bad service while simultaneously extolling good service, it does become increasingly difficult to do that. Slowly, people do begin to act upon what is being said.

Customer service became a formal goal of the college, and extensive training was undertaken. The training component began in 1990 with the purchase of the Noel Levitz program, Connections, designed specifically for support staff in higher education. One administrator, experienced in training and customer service, led several groups of 10 with four sessions for each group spaced over four months, thus giving additional time for discussion and reinforcement. These sessions taught not only the basics of customer service, tailored for a college service staff, but they provided a means for employees to come to know one another far better. As they exchanged personal and departmental information, many interdepartmental problems were solved. New and improved procedures often flowed from these meetings.

So much was learned in Connections training about college problems and behaviors that training was extended to supervisors and non-supervising professionals. The trainer designed customized sessions, linking the programs to problems we knew we had. We also purchased books for each person going through the training — *Zap—The Lightning of Empowerment* for supervisors and *Even Eagles Need a Push* for other professionals. Follow-up training also was conducted for all of the original Connections participants.

A communications component grew out of the Connections training and out of regular meetings of the front line staff who deal daily with students. By coming together across unit lines and through having shared communications training in Connections, people became increasingly aware of the need to improve daily communications. We began a Customer Service Update which is published daily by 9 a.m. to inform the college community of meetings, policy and procedure changes, and general news. Minutes of meetings are circulated on E-Mail. Several offices have actively invited representatives from other offices to attend their staff meetings. The communication effort extends to students with such techniques as regular student focus groups, graduate interviews, and open conversation hours with the dean.

At the same time, the academic departments were exploring core values for the curriculum. All faculty were asked a simple question: What qualities should every graduate of Edison possess? Or, put another way, what should be taught in every section of every course? The dean and associate deans spent two years talking with faculty in the halls about these questions. There were no meetings. Rather, the informal hallway conversations increasingly focused on the college agenda of values.

At the end of the second year, the dean took all faculty off-campus for an all-day retreat. After only four hours the faculty reached consensus and adjourned. Edison's core values were communication skills, ethics, critical thinking, cultural diversity, inquiry or respect for learning, and interpersonal skills/teamwork.

At the beginning of the next academic year, a committee was formed for each value. The committees were asked to define the values, develop methods for incorporating the values into curriculum and instruction, and devise assessment tools. They were also charged to move slowly. The goal was not to develop a quick document but to ponder and explore, to incorporate and infuse the values into the fabric of the college.

Another fundamental element of TQM is the zealous pursuit of customer preference. Like most colleges, Edison routinely uses student evaluations to measure customer satisfaction with specific classes but we have tried to go beyond that. We now survey users of various offices—faculty support, registration, computer labs, etc. Student Development does a comprehensive spring survey on the various support services. Most important, we attempt to get a global view of our product by conducting academic audits on at least 10 percent of the graduating class. We ask them about our business—learning. Questions include:

- How many papers of more than five pages did you write while at Edison?
- In how many courses did you have to use the library?
- What is the most important thing you learned while getting your degree?
- How has your education changed you?

As with most undertakings, it helps to have good timing. The assessment movement was gearing up nationally at this time and Edison, like every other college, was investigating different approaches. Several administrators and faculty attended the Alverno College workshops on assessment. The leader of the assessment team quickly saw the relationship between Edison's values, TQM concepts, and Alverno's approach to assessment. Alverno's on-going assessment and its multiple feedback mechanisms are just another expression of TQM's plan-do-check-act cycle.

Related to assessment is the performance appraisal system. While classic TQM frowns on performance review, we chose to continue with evaluations and root them in a developmental framework. We saw the function of evaluations as leading to improvement. Thus, fear and surprises had to be removed, and communication had

to be expanded. Representatives from key groups—faculty, administrators, and support staff—met as three separate groups and identified the ideal characteristics of their jobs. Then, using a tip from Max DePree's wonderful little book, *Leadership Is An Art*, we designed communication sessions which truly have fostered dialogue. Supervisors distribute, in advance, a list of questions based on the ideal characteristics and current college goals. Employees have an opportunity to think and reflect before meeting with their supervisor. Questions we have used include:

- What has been your most significant achievement in the past year?
- What do you want to concentrate on next year for professional development?
- How do you decide what students need to learn in your discipline?
- Give an example of an activity in one of your classes in which students were challenged to think critically.
- What are two or three important things that you have learned in the past year?
- What talent or expertise do you possess that you believe you have not been able to use fully yet at Edison?
- What can I change in my operation that would help you do a better job?

Evaluation interviews have changed from tense, unproductive sessions into genuine open discussions where both parties learn, explore, and grow. The trust level is improving, and problems are being resolved.

Classroom research is another part of assessment or plan-do-check-act. A senior professor has spearheaded a mini-grants program to reward faculty who undertake systematic research on a small scale. Results are shared in faculty development sessions and are published.

We have approached the issue of empowerment cautiously. Empowering without enabling is unfair, and empowerment in a values vacuum is dangerous. We felt we could not push decisions to their lowest level until we had some confidence that people would know how to make appropriate decisions. They needed to know the organizational ground rules. They needed to know what the college valued in employee performance. And they needed more help to know how to operate in the new manner. Thus, the vision statement, the customer service program, the values clarification, and the training were all necessary before we felt comfortable in asking people to undertake new behavior. Even then we knew we would have some poor

decisions but early, tentative decisions by inexperienced decision-makers cannot be criticized and overturned. If risk-taking and personal responsibility are to be fostered, people need to be given the tools to be successful. And administrators must be prepared to live with an occasionally unpleasant consequence.

We have far to go on this front. Several managers are somewhat ambivalent and one or two are almost hostile. All of us feel uncomfortable from time to time as we explore new roles and relationships. From first-line supervisor to president, all of us feel out of control sometimes. Almost every one of us has asked "What's MY job now?" Frank and open communication becomes more critical in this environment.

The positive part of this, of course, is the energy unleashed when people with talent and ideas are permitted to flourish. Managers do far less controlling and far more leading than they used to. We have been able to collapse administrative positions when resignations permitted. Cross-functional teams do not exist in the classic TQM sense but we have instituted numerous problem-solving task forces and we do hold regular meetings of the front-line staff. The front liners are individuals who deal daily with students—people from the bookstore, admissions, faculty support offices, etc. By coming together across unit lines, they increasingly solve their own problems. Just as importantly, they bring those problems that they cannot solve to the attention of administrators.

Five years have gone by and we are only now beginning to explore the systems monitoring components of TQM—the components where many institutions start. We know our systems need lots of work—that is not the issue. Rather, we finally feel that the philosophy, values, and culture are well enough entrenched that we can dare to expand our focus. Conflict resolution and teamwork training will begin this year. College units will begin exploring how the core values pertain to them. Process monitoring tools are used minimally in some areas but systematic training still has not begun.

By any expert's definition, our TQM initiative is not very far along. It's been a long, slow road. We are not Baldridge Award material. But we do not want to become like Florida Power and Light and abandon TQM when one champion leaves the organization. Nor do we want to emulate those firms which put themselves in fiscal peril by focusing exclusively on winning national awards.

Instead, we believe that our systems will change more easily and that those changes will last when they are rooted in a college-wide philosophy, a common vision, and a shared set of values.

The Total Quality Management Journey

by Billy Hair

Why TQM at Savannah Tech?

In our own particular institution there were three basic reasons why it was decided to embark what has been both a frustrating and exhilarating journey.

The first was my own background. Having been trained in the schools of business prior to changing to an educational career, I had a strong sense that higher education institutions should be operated along sound business principles. While this may seem logical to those in the business world, the world of academia does not always agree. There are some who argue that this dilutes the purpose and mission of our institutions. There are still others who argue that this emphasis on managing by the TQM method is nothing but another sly move on management's part to get more for less. There are some who even would argue that to convert a student into a customer is both demeaning and proletariat. I happen to subscribe to none of these arguments, but to be really successful in implementing TQM, I quickly realized that these arguments are real to some, and that these issues must be addressed. Because these are subjective attitudinal issues and not factual ones, the task is much more difficult.

The second motivation was vision. Not only the vision of the President, which is absolutely essential, but also the broader institutional vision was a motivation. The concepts of quality and always getting better are as American as the flag and motherhood, but I can assure you that implementing TQM in a college takes considerably longer than motherhood and sparks much greater emotion than those surrounding our flag.

The main paradigm shift in focusing on quality does not come from the belief that quality is not important, but the belief that faculty and staff are not already producing high quality in their classrooms and staff areas. Most of us are willing to change if we are convinced that change is necessary, but not if we believe that this particular change is unneeded. This particular point is extremely important. Prior to embarking on this journey, a comprehensive objective assessment of quality needs to be done by the institution. This will not only bring attention to the quality issue, but will also help convince those most resistant that the level of quality is not what it should be. A side benefit of this initial quality assessment is that it provides a

beginning benchmark for later measurements of improvement. It is absolutely critical that this assessment of quality not be construed to be an evaluation of individuals. This assessment should focus on the quality of the end product, a well-educated student.

The final motivation to begin this journey was to practice what we preach. Most institutions like ours were already in the business of teaching this concept to business and industry. In our particular case, we had already established a Total Quality and Productivity Development Center. So how could we in good conscience say this is a wonderful concept for others, but not for us. I can say unequivocally that our own TQM efforts have added great credibility to our external TQM training.

How Did We Do It?

We began our journey in January 1992, well ahead of the massive attention that TQM receives today. This had both good and bad ramifications. Because there was little in the literature on how to implement TQM in a college, we had to develop a tailor-made plan for us. This was very beneficial. Some of the differences that affect implementation of TQM are:

1. Size
2. Diversity of Faculty/Students
3. Urban/Rural
4. Vision/Non-Vision
5. Age of Institution (i.e., length of "tradition")
6. Terminal vs. Transfer Mission

You can see from the list above that trying to use a cookbook approach would have been very detrimental, and had one been available, it would have been very tempting to fall into this trap. The negative part of being the first was that we had little outside expertise to draw upon. Institutions who begin now are at a tremendous advantage because they can benefit from the success and failures of many institutions.

Step 1.

We began by training what we called the "evangelists." These were true believers who embraced the concept immediately and believed that TQM would really improve our institution. These were individuals who required no attitudinal training, but technical training only.

Step 2.

We continuously trained everyone throughout the following year. Our goal was to train everyone as quickly as possible. This was a mistake. We violated the admonishment of William Butler Yeats who stated that "trying to educate someone before they are ready in mind and spirit is like watering a stone hoping it will grow into a boulder." We attempted to give people the skill before they had the will. Anyone receiving TQM training should first completely understand the concept and embrace it as being both applicable and worthwhile.

Step 3.

We then established Process Action Teams on a voluntary basis to work on specific processes that needed improvement. This was very successful and should be a very important step to any institution which is implementing TQM. Early success in process improvement is essential in initiating and maintaining momentum for TQM. It is important that the processes chosen for early TQM intervention be ones that can be studied at least quarterly and that changes made produce measurable positive results. Otherwise, the early momentum quickly fades. The tendency which must be avoided is to select processes that are the most visible, but are too complex or time consuming to teach quickly. Save these processes for later.

Step 4.

The next thing our institution did was to establish a Customer Service Department. I believe this had the greatest single impact on changing our internal attitudes. I firmly believe that you cannot overlay a successful TQM program over a traditional college organizational structure. It is not mandatory to establish a Customer Service Department, but it is essential to do something bold to send the message that this is not just the fad of the week and that the leadership is serious about changing the way the college does business.

Step 5.

It is important to keep things moving. There are several ways to do this. Someone can be assigned to coordinate this effort full-time. This is highly recommended. Most TQM implementations take a lot of time. It is also very important to have regular and frequent successes and communications about what is going on. It is easier to support and harder to defeat efforts that everyone knows are being successful.

What Will TQM Do For Your Institution

1. One guarantee is that TQM will get everyone talking and thinking about quality and continuous improvement. Even if through serendipity, this will make the organization better.

2. The focus will change to improvement. The status quo will be challenged. The thought processes will change from "if it's not broken, don't fix it" to "even though it's not broken, we can do it better."

3. Because of the very nature of TQM and how it has to be implemented, people will get involved across disciplines and authority levels. This will dramatically improve communication and knowledge levels throughout the organization.

4. Because of the concept of empowerment, it will change managers' attitudes from autocratic to democratic. This will not happen overnight, and it will take some managers longer than others, but the trend will definitely shift to a more collegial decision making environment.

5. TQM will also begin to shift the conversation and activity from subjective to objective. The focus will be on measurement and facts. This makes it much easier to identify both problems and solutions.

What TQM Will Not Do For Your Institution

1. There will always be nay sayers. TQM will not eliminate negative nonproductive people by itself. It will reduce their scope of influence. Eliminating people who are negative and non-productive is a personnel issue and not a quality issue. They should be eliminated whether or not TQM is implemented.

2. Results will not be immediate. Total Quality Management is not a program, but a culture. Because of the nature of the way cultures change, progress will be continuous, but slow. The implementation cannot get ahead of the shift in attitudes.

3. The emphasis will be on process improvement, not product improvement. The symptom is product deficiencies, but the cause is process deficiencies. Therefore, the intervention should be administered at the process level. Therefore, immediate product improvement will probably not occur. Patience is paramount.

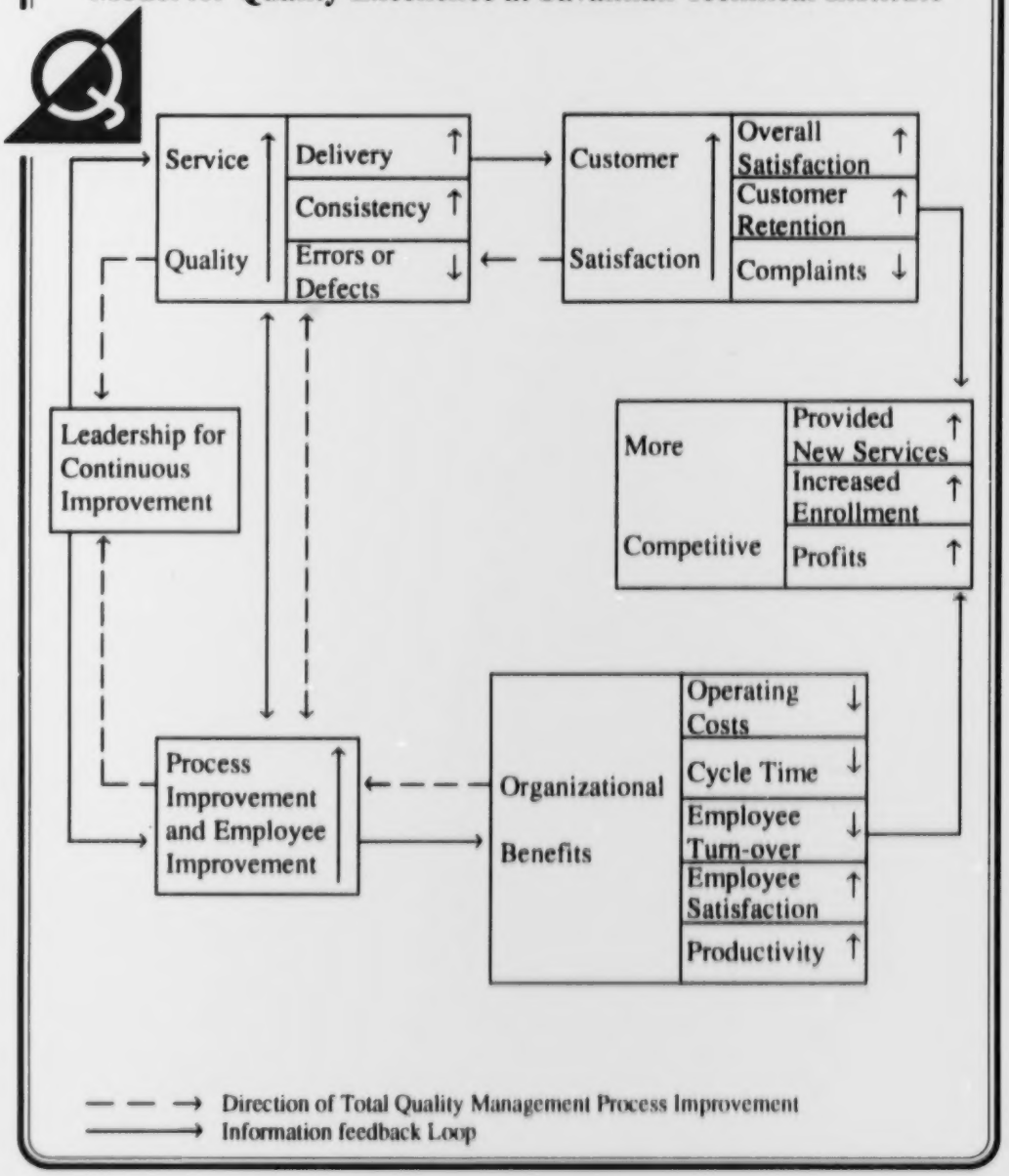
Conclusion

Having been a leader and manager for 25 years, I can say unequivocally that there is no better way to improve organizations and thereby the products and services they produce than through the implementation to Total Quality Management. It not only should be done, it must be done.

The TQM journey is long and difficult. To believe anything else is foolish and will lead to frustration and failure. But if done properly and consistently, TQM will transform an institution into a high performance organization.

Total Quality Management Model

Model for Quality Excellence at Savannah Technical Institute



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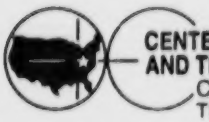

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